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OPINION

Labor arbitration head is a de Blasio fundraiser

By Post Editorial Board

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Martin Scheinman in 2005, de Blasio in NYC December 23rd

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United Federation of Teachers. In this capacity, he will head a three-person panel that will help determine whether nurses and teachers deserve a 4 percent raise. How that panel decides will be important not just for nurses and teachers, but for the precedent it sets at a time when many other contracts with city workers are up for negotiation.

What complicates this is that Scheinman was also a fund-raiser for Bill de Blasio. Scheinman, who has a good reputation as an arbitrator, claims there's no conflict between serving on the arbitration panel and being a financial supporter of the incoming mayor, in part because he was named to the panel long before de Blasio even ran.

Sorry, but we don't buy it.

Appearances mean something. Even in the best of circumstances, the arbitration process has shown a built-in bias toward unions: Panels often allow wage increases whether or not the state or a given municipality can afford it. How can people really be confident in Scheinman's independence when he backed a candidate who had the support of health-care workers in the primary and the teachers in the general?

At some point, as de Blasio's candidacy picked up steam, Scheinman should have recognized the coming conflict of interest for what it was. Having a fund-raiser for a labor-friendly mayor run an arbitration panel just doesn't pass the smell test.

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